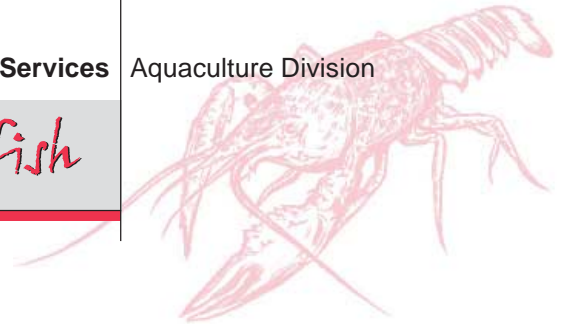


## Australian Red Claw Crayfish



**Australian Red Claw Crayfish** (*Cherax quadricarinatus*) are often called “freshwater lobsters” for their physical resemblance and large size—red claw can grow to over one pound. Native to tropical northern Australia, red claw have been cultured there since 1985. Red claw have also been grown in New Zealand, Southeast Asia, Africa, Central and South America, and the U.S.

In the U.S., most production is confined to a group of half-a dozen producers in northern Texas. These growers have a combined 300 acres, and are primarily ranchers that have diversified. They produce 2500 to 3000 pounds to an acre, and can produce two crops per year. Most of their product is shipped to high-end markets in Mexico City.

Red Claw could survive and perhaps thrive during the summer months in North Carolina. Research in the southeastern U.S. estimates that farms in North Carolina would likely produce about 1000 pounds per acre during the 5 to 7 month growing season. Growers would need to import red claw juveniles for stocking because the growing season is not long enough to raise juveniles in outdoor ponds. Research and commercial experience in other southeastern states indicate that the cost of raising juveniles indoors during the winter months is too costly.

At present, the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission does not allow the importation and culture of Red Claw into the state. While the Red Claw crawfish dies in cold temperatures, there are many thermally enriched waters in the state where the species could survive the winter. Non-native crawfish have been identified as one of the more significant threats to our native populations. There is also concern that exotic parasites and diseases from non-native crawfish could be transferred to our native species.

The Red Swamp crawfish is an alternative for North Carolinians wishing to culture crawfish. Red Swamp crawfish are native to the state, grow to about 30 grams, and readily produce and overwinter in ponds. North Carolina has an active growers association that sponsors three crawfish boils at state farmers markets during the May – June harvest season. For more information on the association and Red Swamp crawfish farming, see the **North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services** Aquaculture Division Website: [www.ncagr.com/aquacult](http://www.ncagr.com/aquacult).